

India's National Security: Annual Review 2018 edited by
Satish Kumar, New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2018, pp. 416, Rs 1295

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National security refers to securing a nation's citizens, territory, resources, assets, ideologies, institutions, and interests against threats which may emanate from changing geopolitical state of affairs, changing relations between nations, groups, races, sects, advancing technology and changing ideology. In the prevailing complex geopolitical scenario, India's national security is facing new challenges and acquiring new dimensions with every passing year. India's security canvas needs to take into account the geopolitical and geo-economic manoeuvring, changing global equations, India's crucial centralised location in the Indian Ocean region, increasing capabilities of hostile neighbours, religious radicalisation, both internally and globally, and rapidly increasing role of high-end technology, among many others. *India's National Security: Annual Review 2018* is the seventeenth edition in the series of annual security reviews edited by Professor Satish Kumar, published under the aegis of Foundation for National Security Research, New Delhi. The book focuses on India's national security in the current geopolitical environment and covers the events of 2016 and 2017. It presents an analysis of various internal and external facets of India's security by a variety of contributors and is helmed by the editor, an eminent academic and currently Director, Foundation for National Security Research.

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Like previous editions, the first section, forming almost half the book, is dedicated to analysing India's security environment and contains four chapters authored by Satish Kumar, and a fifth by Ankita Dutta and P. Blandina Mark. In Chapter 2, Kumar begins by examining strategic trends in the United States (US), Russia, China, European Union (EU) nations and Japan that have directly or indirectly affected India. Donald Trump's assumption of power in the US in January 2017 was perhaps the most significant geopolitical event of the period and seems to have underwritten all major global security trends. Trump's 'America First' policy, unostentatious declarations in the National Security Strategy viewing China as strategic competitor, standoff against Russia and Iran and revisit of Paris accord have been some of his major disruptors of the global security trends. His attitude also seems to have driven a wedge between the US and the European Union (EU) nations which have traditionally been allies.

The years 2016 and 2017 also saw prominent leaders like Putin and Xi consolidating their positions internally and recasting their international relations. In particular, China's impetus towards its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), hardening of stance on the South China Sea, and efforts at increasing footprint in the international canvas by expansive cooperation and alleged economic entrapment have set alarm bells ringing the world over, including in India.

Chapter 3 focuses on those external developments that have had a direct bearing on India's security environment. This is further divided into four sub-sections. Kumar begins by covering developments with our adversarial neighbours, China and Pakistan, followed by an analysis of equations with major global powers whom he calls India's security providers. He highlights China's continued attempts to undermine India through aggressive and assertive behaviour, an example being the Doklam standoff in 2017; frequent border transgressions; taking exception to India's activities in Arunachal Pradesh; the increasing nexus with Pakistan; and scuttling India's rise in international fora. With respect to Pakistan, he highlights its illegitimate attempts to destabilise Kashmir and sponsor terrorism. Kumar also flags India's new-found defence cooperation with the US with its multiple milestones, that is, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and India's elevation to 'Major Defence Partner' status by the US under National Defense Authorization Act, 2017, besides highlighting the surge of defence, nuclear and infrastructure understandings with other major powers.

The third sub-section highlights prominent strategic developments in the smaller immediate neighbours in the subcontinent as well as Southwest Asian nations of Afghanistan and Iran. The growing Chinese footprint and economic clout vis-à-vis South Asia appears to be the backdrop to the issues discussed. The author particularly highlights India's security dimension vis-à-vis Afghanistan, which he projects as becoming a powerplay arena for major global powers. India's seemingly flourishing economic relations with Iran experiencing a flutter over Iran's wantonness related to its Indian projects too has been highlighted. In 2018, US sanctions on Iran seemed to have brought about a turnaround in the latter's attitude.

This section also covers developments in the local associations, namely, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). The last sub-section deals with different facets of Indian strategic security with regards to the nations of Asia-Pacific, West Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the endeavour of the government to build consensus on terrorism and strategic partnerships emerge as the main areas of focus.

Chapter 4 focuses on the internal security situation, mainly discussing issues of the turbulent North-East, left-wing extremism and Kashmir insurgency. Authored by Kumar, the chapter also highlights the positive indicators on the economic security front, menacing rise of cybersecurity threat and manifestation of artificial intelligence in national security. In the last chapter (Chapter 5) of the section, Ankita Dutta and P. Blandina Mark provide updates on defence-related developments during the period under consideration.

The next four sections of the book provide perspectives of various experts on wide-ranging issues related to India's security paradigm. Specifically, these sections cover India's security zone; threats and challenges; economic and technological issues; strategic concerns; and a final assessment.

Chapter 6 by Nihar R. Nayak discusses in detail the rebalancing of India's security relations with Nepal and Bhutan, particularly in the light of increasing conflicts with China as well as changing global security dynamics. In chapter 7, A.R. Ghyanshyam outlines the vast resource potential of the African nations where the Indian diaspora has contributed immensely to building their economy and the potential of their shared growth with India. Chapter 8 is authored by P.S. Raghvan

and examines the historically strong Indo-Russian partnership amid growing speculations that it may be losing momentum. Raghavan highlights the steps taken by both sides to strengthen the partnership and the need to grasp the fresh opportunities being thrown up so as to better tackle future challenges. In Chapter 9, Meera Shankar discusses the emerging US interest in India and strengthening bilateral relations, highlighting in particular defence cooperation and the US support for India's concerns like terrorism, in spite of differences on issues such as the H-1B visa and climate change.

Changing contours of various threats and challenges have been analysed by experts in the next section, where Ajit Lal, a former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, covers the threat of extreme radical Islamism that seems to be taking over Kashmir insurgency (Chapter 10). In Chapter 11, Tilak Devasher has similarly scrutinised how growing Islamisation seems to be becoming a trend in Pakistani politics and its future threat to India. Jayadeva Ranade's chapter focuses on the increasing threat from China which emanates from its dream of attaining leadership globally as well as in the Asia-Pacific, its aggressive and coercive diplomacy combined with use of its economic prowess and its attempts to destabilise its rivals with well-crafted multipronged strategy. In particular, China's view of India as a rival and its constant overt and subtle efforts to undermine New Delhi with territorial claims, attempts at military hegemony, river water politics, etc., that are driving the existing trust deficit to new lows, have been well brought out.

In the section on economic and technological issues, Chapter 13 by Rakesh Bharti Mittal highlights the various governmental initiatives to bring about improvement in the distressed agricultural sector of India on the one hand, and reiterates grassroots implementation of some of the known measures to improve agricultural security on the other. In Chapter 14, Chandrajit Banerjee draws attention to the strategic implications of India's lag vis-à-vis Industrial Revolution 4.0 (marked by high-end technology manufacturing), stressing on bringing in supportive policies to put India on the path of technological revolution in view of India's immense potential. Chapter 15 by scientists D.R. Lakshminarasimhaiah and Subrata Rakshit broadly covers the safety and security implications of the rapidly burgeoning field of artificial intelligence and associated threats, while touching upon India specific concerns, initiatives and possible ways forward.

In the next section, Chapters 16-18, authored by Vinod Patney, Manpreet Sethi, and Gurmeet Kanwal, succinctly analyse India's predicaments and vulnerabilities on crucial issues of outer space vulnerabilities, increasing nuclear missile threat, and the concerns of future wars, giving their respective views on strategic priorities in these matters. These discussions in the book, though thought-provoking, just scratch the surface of the strategic issues which India faces today. Many other issues such as defence production, defence preparedness, military reorganisation and security infrastructure status, also have considerable implications for national security. Some issues like updates on defence production and acquisition have been covered under the topic 'India's Defence Initiatives' earlier in the book. However, a more holistic and deeper analysis of India's strategic concerns in this section would have enhanced the reader's understanding.

The editor ends the book with his assessment of the developments of the period, with his analysis mostly conforming to that of the other contributors. Though he has very well drawn an overall security picture from developments in the global arena, Kumar has avoided crystal-gazing based on the trends. He has highlighted the unstable nature of relations with China and hostile relations with Pakistan; and on similar lines as other analysts, he has also asserted on the need to improve military preparedness as well as maintaining a perpetual guard against these two nations. His conjecture of India's new partnerships with the US, Japan, France, Israel and other Asia-Pacific nations yielding little or no gains may be a little harsh and premature. In fact, as he himself states later, these have long gestation periods before they bear fruit. However, Kumar does bring out the strains on India's security environment due to China's successful wooing away of India's neighbours quite well.

In the opinion of this reviewer, the inclusion of 'technology' would have added value to the larger discussion on national security. Furthermore, discussion on the military development of our main adversaries—China and Pakistan—and the related implications must find mention in any review of national security. For example, it is particularly important to cover the implications of the restructuring of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which unfolded during the period under review.

Overall, the book is an informative and invaluable compilation of wide-ranging developments of 2016 and 2017, their analysis and

assessment of implications on India's national security. The viewpoints of the pundits of various spheres on different facets of national security make it an interesting read for those interested in the subject. Given the plethora of events that have occurred in 2018, which have been quite disruptive on global security trends, the next edition of the review is eagerly awaited.